



Lazy Dungeon Master



Volume 15 – The Dungeon
Core Assembly

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Volume Fifteen - The Dungeon Core Assembly

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Chapter 151 - Rin's Parting Gift

Spring arrived.

The snow melting, a warmer air filled the area.

It's said that spring is a season of encounters, but for [Cave of Desires], it's one of parting.

"You have to go?"

[Yeah. Thanks, for the care. Kehma.]

Promising to leave in the spring, the black wolf—the enigmatic black slime (wolf type), Rin, had already decided to leave the dungeon once winter ended. Although I was thinking about tricking it with something like [Winter is forever you know?], it would've been pretty bad if I got exposed. It also would've felt like keeping a ticking bomb in the dungeon.

[Ah, right. I made this. Here.]

"Nn? What's this?"

Rin handed me an orb. I caught it with the messenger golem's hand. It's a black orb about the size of a baseball. It's so black that it looks like it's eating up the light. The heck is this thing?

[It's a Gravity, Bomb. If you strike it, most enemies, will die.]

"Oi, don't give me something like that. Am I some suicide bomber?"

[Kukuku, were you, surprised? It's alright, I set, a keyword. Hold it with, your hand. After you say it, throw it. The keyword, is [Black Plate].]

So there's a safety... seriously, I still don't know what this guy is at all.

"Black... ah, it'd be bad to say it now."

[Kukuku! You didn't fall, for it huh! As expected, Kehma is, smart.]

"Hahaha. Could you give me another? I'd like to try it out against boss."

[Sure, try a few, times. I make them, myself, so there's a limit... But, they don't work, against me, you know?]

Saying that, five of the black orbs dropped out from Rins black pelt. It rolled them over with its forefoot. Are you some kind of powder keg? Your existence

itself is like a bomb, though.

[That's the limit. Use them, well. Then, see you.]

"Yeah... when are you coming again? Next year?"

[No idea, but till then, don't die, yeah? ... Ah, Kehma can't die, so it's alright, right? Well, see you.]

Laughing, Rin left the cave.

On this day, Rin, who magnificently left the cave in broad daylight, was seen by adventurers that carried white plates. It ate a ton of white plates as a midday snack.

"... It left?"

"Yeah, it feels like I just put down some heavy luggage. Phew."

I sighed.

So I was feeling stressed by the absurd bomb named Rin being in the dungeon after all? I just feel like I finally removed a popcorn kernel from between my teeth right now, it's a pretty refreshing feeling.

There's also the fact that our DP income went down since Rin isn't in the dungeon anymore, so there's that. It gave us quite a lot of income over the winter. Well, it's fine.

It gave me these Gravity Bomb things, they seem pretty dangerous... I wonder how strong they are. There's no way they're strong enough to collapse a dungeon right? I'm troubled about where I should put them!

... I was also able to advance the dungeon's development while Rin was here. I started making the new riddle area after the warehouse area, as well as an arena area just beyond that.

The arena area is a kind of miniboss fight. The haniwa golem is the opponent there.

It's a bit lonely since there isn't an audience though.

After the arena area it turns back into what you'd call more of a normal dungeon area. Taking a break there, the next floor has the boss room and the innermost core room.

... By the way, the innermost core room is a two-layer structure, with a dummy core room on one side that conceals a hidden inner room... that also

has a dummy core. Why would I make a wasteful thing like that? That's because I don't really know where I should put the real dungeon core.

Since the saintess used [Treaty], a skill that could seal off a dungeon core's movement, I want to put it in safe a place as possible.

On the other hand, just putting it as far in as possible isn't any good either. Dungeon cores = farthest in. That's how all adventurers think.

So then I thought about making a two-layer system using a dummy core and the real core and tried it, but... there might be people that can see through the trick. I realized that after I made it, so I decided to put another dummy core there.

So right now the real dungeon core is hidden in the arena area's ceiling lights. It's hidden among shining orb light magic tools.

Well, this should be good enough for now. I'll have to react immediately if people make their way past the riddle area though.

"Ah, right, Kehma. I'll be away from the dungeon for a bit, is that alright?"
"Going away? You're leaving...? To where?"

Is there somewhere to go?
Maybe it's some business in Sia or Pavuera?

"To the dungeon core assembly!"

... Which reminds me, there was something said about something like that, huh.

"Can't I go with you?"
"I've never seen dungeon masters get brought along, so I don't think so. I think I'll be back in two or three days, so please wait here. I wasn't able to go last year because of the bandits after all."

In other words, what she's doing isn't different from what she's always done.

"Got it. So, when are you leaving?"
"Ah, today."

Rokuko's body started emitting a faint light.

"That's...?"

“Un. I’m off... Not like I want to go, though.”

At that moment, a magic formation appeared like it was wrapping around Rokuko and, with a bang, she disappeared.

... Tell me sooner, oi.

Chapter 152 - The Dungeon Core Assembly

When her vision returned from being filled with bright light, she was at a buffet venue under the blue sky. It looked as though the assembly had already started, as there was a red werewolf filling its mouth with meat, as well a gold skeleton that was laughing while drinking black tea.

There was a black dragon in the distance gulping down alcohol out of a barrel, accompanied by a unicorn jeering it on.

At first glance, there were a lot of races intermingling, making quite a peaceful scene.

However, each and every one of the people there were dungeon cores.

Although there were quite a lot of people in the form of a human, the majority were using mimicry to take human form.

“Now then...”

Rokuko, like every year, quietly walked to a corner.

... This year was outdoors, so she really didn't feel like eating. That's because without there being any walls, she didn't feel like she was actually in a corner.

While moving towards the corner, a large snake, large frog, and large slug each about the size of a human turned up in front of her.

“Hoooh. If it isn't 695. What're you doin?”

“Gue gue gue gue, rather, you're still alive eh?”

“You didn't come last year and your DP was 0, so we thought you died, haha.”

“Si-650, 651, 652... L-long time, no see.”

“Haaaah!? Add the 'No.'!”

“Hiii!?”

Bang! No. 650's snake tail make a loud noise, causing Rokuko's body to once again stiffen up.

Incidentally, adding [No.] was a form of honorific amongst dungeon cores. Rokuko absolutely didn't want to use it for those guys.

“W-what, w-we're part of the same 600 series, so isn't it, alright?”

“Huuuuuuuh? I can't hear you. Gekokoko... What's this lowest ranked 695

saying?”

As though to block Rokuko’s path out, Core 651, the large frog, went around her right side behind her.

“Yeah yeah, aren’t you a cheeky one?”

“Hiuuu...”

Core 652, the large slug, placed his hand (?) on Rokuko’s shoulder.

This was the trinity, a three-way deadlock... Rokuko felt goosebumps all over her.

The large snake brought its face close to Rokuko, its tongue slipping in and out of its mouth.

“Shaaa... Fufufu, how ’bout we move over there for a bit?”

“N-no! Let go—”

“It’s alright, alright I say~. Not like you’ll die, geko geko geko!”

“Nooow~, how about you come with us?”

The place they gestured was the place that Rokuko was originally heading to, but her reason was very different from these three that wanted to take her there. That’s why she was quietly heading there—to avoid being found by this kind of people.

They were trying to take Rokuko, but no one cared... After all, it was nothing but a struggle between those in the lower rankings.

Like they wouldn’t worry about ants crowding around toffee dropped on the ground, the majority of dungeon cores there didn’t bother paying attention to Rokuko and the other three.

“Oh, you alright here?”

Just then, a red salamander appeared.

Dungeon Core No. 112, Ontentoo.

The dungeon core of a fifty-one floor dungeon that practically filled an entire mountain, [Flame Cavern].

Fully enjoying a slow life with his red dragon wife that was his master, even if he couldn’t be called top-class, he was a firmly middle-ranked dungeon core.

He was also part of the 100 series, so he was their senior.

“D-Dungeon Core No. 112-sama!? What business do you have with us?”

“Aah? ... Ah... Ah. Nothing for you guys. You there, 695. Come.”

“Eh? U-um, this person?”

“What, are you complaining? You, what’re your number?”

“Si-650! E-e-excuse me, No. 112-sama, I’m a fan!”

Because the snake didn’t have a hand to shake, he held out a tail. However, Ontentoo ignored him and talked to Rokuko.

“Right. Well 695, let’s go.”

“U-umm... un.”

Taken by Ontentoo, Rokuko was released by the three’s encirclement. Core 650, still holding his tail out, was utterly surprised.

... While getting rid of the slug’s mucus with [Cleanup], Rokuko addressed Ontentoo, who was silently walking in front of her.

“U-umm, No. 112... sama?”

“Aah!? Stupid, I don’t need somethin’ like [No.] or [-sama]. Raaather, when’d you turn into a yesman?”

Turning around almost with a roar as though he were about to snap at her any second, Ontentoo brought his face near her’s.

As a senior, Ontentoo’s name was somewhat known. That’s why for a little while now since he took Rokuko people had been staring their direction.

“B-because, a low-ranked dungeon like me... surrounded by three people, I couldn’t talk back.”

“Haah? Ah, ah. Right, right.”

Ontentoo poked Rokuko with his fire-tipped tail that was characteristic of salamanders.

It was obvious that he held back with it, but even so it was still considerably painful for Rokuko. And a bit hot. He had just helped her so it’s not like she could say anything though.

“Kukaka, you shouldn’t say something like that. You defeated me!”

“... That was thanks to Kehma, not me.”

“Kakaka! That’s not wrong, honestly isn’t bad... but it’s true that you won. Doesn’t a core’s abilities include their master? In other words, for me, the

power of my beloved wife is included!”

Ontentoo laughed.

People around them heard their conversation.

“... Defeated him?”

“Against No. 112...?”

“695... the lowest rank did?”

Such lines could be heard coming from their surroundings.

In particular, people questioning just what sort of dirty trick she used could be heard, but since they really had used an unfair trick, she couldn’t even say anything. The dungeon battle itself used irregular rules in the first place.

“... Kehma said that was a tie you know?”

“Then do you want to try switching offense and defense next time?”

“Sorry, but I decline... ah, I can make it from here. Thank you for the help, No. 112.”

With that, Rokuko started to leave. However, Ontentoo stopped her.

“Well, hold up. [Father]’s greeting will be soon. How about we get something to eat until then? The meat here’s pretty good you know?”

“Ah, good. It’s here this year again... Even though dungeon cores don’t actually need to eat to live.”

“There’s no trash or poison mixed in at this table so don’t worry. Or do you not trust me? Oooh? I’m your benefactor you know?”

“... Uu. T-then I’ll take a little.”

Rokuko timidly bit into the meat that Ontentoo held out for her.

The instant she bit into it, the meat’s juices spread throughout her mouth, wrapping her tongue with the rich flavor of the meat.

... She didn’t know what kind of meat this was, but it was amazingly delicious. Rokuko believed that its flavor would be a hit with Meat.

“Ou, you’re getting messy. [Cleanup].”

“Om, nom. T-thanks.”

“Kakaka! You’re welcome.”

After a while of Rokuko eating her fill, a voice echoed through the area.

[Yo, my adorable children. Is everyone doing well?]

Looking up into the sky, there was a single man projected on a huge monitor floating in the air.

Chapter 153 - Father

The dungeon cores all looked at the man that was displayed on the monitor at the same time. Naturally, this included Rokuko as well.

“Tou-sama... it’s been two years since I’ve paid my respects to your countenance.”

Other than [Father] and [Tou-sama], there were also people calling him [King] and [God]. The man had black hair and dark skin and was wrapped in a deep blue vestment. Although Rokuko said ‘countenance’, half of his face was hidden by an eye mask. None of his mouth was hidden, though, and he was smiling.

Not one of the dungeon cores here knew who he truly was.

However, at the very least, all of the dungeon cores here had been produced by him. This was an unshakable truth.

The standard leading theory was that he was [Dungeon Core No. 0] and all of the dungeon cores here were his [Dummy Cores].

Many of the dungeon cores that took human shape did so because he, as their [Father] had a human shape—or, at the very least, appeared in that form. Therefore, Haku, who held a human shape from the start, was the object of envy of many of the dungeon cores.

... Another reason Haku lowered the ranking of Rokuko’s dungeon was so that she wouldn’t be targeted by others’ begrudging.

[Oh, are there fewer of you? That’s saddening. Maybe I should supplement it with some new children... What do you think, 1?]

“Sir! If father believes as such, should father not do so?”

The knight-formed Core 1 answered [Father]’s question. In this dungeon core assembly, the most influential person—excluding [Father]—was this person. The single-digit number wasn’t just for show.

[Hmm. That’s a boring answer. Is there any child that has another opinion?]

However, seeming as though Core 1’s answer didn’t satisfy him, [Father] asked the other cores for an opinion.

—However, no one said anything. No, they couldn't say anything. Because if they did say something, that was the same thing as speaking out against Core 1. And to begin with, reproving [Father] was a very awful thing to do.

“Could I give my opinion, Otou-sama?”

Among them, a single core raised their hand. Who? Who was so reckless—thinking that, everyone looked towards the person.

[What is it? 89, what is your opinion?]

[Father]'s voice rose as though delighted. Core 89... Haku smiled.

“Approximately seventy percent of the 600 series are still alive. It might be somewhat premature to birth younger siblings. Would it not be more acceptable to wait for them to decrease a little longer?”

“What's this [Betrayal] saying!?”

With a roar, a quaking voice shook the ground. Core 5, a black dragon, interrupted the conversation between Haku and [Father]. However, [Father] gently chided 5.

[5. Right now, I am listening to what 89 has to say. You can speak afterwards.]
“E-excuse my impoliteness, dad! But!”

[Didn't I say I would listen afterwards? 5 is wise, so could you wait patiently for me?]

“Y-yes...”

Told that he could wait as he was wise, he would have to deny that if he flared up again. Core 5 could do nothing but withdraw. Then, [Father] asked Haku again.

[Now, 89, how much do you believe the number of children should decrease beforehand?]

“When the number of surviving members of the 600 series drops below fifty person, I think. It has been similar to that until now.”

[Indeed, that is an understandable opinion. Thank you for the consultation.]

“I am honored to hear your praise.”

Haku bowed reverently.

[Next, I will hear 5's opinion. What is it?]

"Sir! Father, that 89 there is a [Betrayed] and hunts our brethren. Of the dungeon cores that died, the majority are due to 89's guidance. That is likely why she has kept track of the fine details of how many dungeons have survived... she does not deserve having her opinion heard!"

[Hmph. 89, is this so?]

"Yes, I certainly am trimming away other dungeon cores so that I may live, Otou-sama. Is there a problem with that?"

Haku asserted herself, not shy in the least.

[None. Sacrificing others in order to live—that is the correct way. Huh? I get the feeling that I said that last year as well.]

"It has been said every year, Otou-sama."

[That so? Well, even so, everyone here is one of my adorable children. Be moderate, alright?]

"Yes, I understand."

Haku smiled.

Haku being disparaged as a [Betrayed] was a usual thing. [Father] lightly admonishing her was also a usual thing.

[So now, what is your opinion on birthing new children, 5?]

"T-that's... I think it's best for dad to do what he wants."

[Yup, thanks. Maybe I should try asking some other children, too...]

Muttering as though bored, [Father] started looking for someone else to ask.

[Oh.]

His gaze swept towards Rokuko and stopped.

Rokuko trembled... Surely he wouldn't ask her. Surely.

[112, what do you think? Do you have an opinion?]

So that was it. He wasn't looking at her. Realizing that, Rokuko breathed a sigh of relief.

"Aah... right, huh, I agree with No. 5, father should do what he wants... yeah.

If I had to say something, new kids popping up would be interesting? Well, I'll wait even if it doesn't happen right now."

[Heeh. Interesting, huh. That's good.]

Forcibly using polite speech, something he wasn't used to, Ontentoo sounded amusing in various ways. With [Father]'s laughing Core 5 sent Ontentoo a look as though to say [Good Job].

[Well, while we're at it, 695. What do you think?"
"... Haeeh!?"

Suddenly talked to by [Father], Rokuko turned rigid.
... While thinking that she'd love if he stopped with the surprise attacks, she spoke slowly.

"U-ummm... I-I, um, right now, I'm the lowest ranked, of the 600 series... so if I could have juniors, I would be happy, umm, I think... If I were surpassed, I think that I would have mixed feelings about it."

[Hahaha, mixed feeling, huh. People like you are alright, 695.]

Rokuko's face reddened up like a balloon. [People like you], in other words [like Rokuko], which meant that he'd watched Rokuko enough to have an impression of her.

Likewise, she may have simply stood out by being last in the rankings.

Contrasting Rokuko, Haku was smiling radiantly.

Rokuko let out her breath. Even though she knew she was tense, she couldn't help it.

He listened to several other cores after that. However, everything followed what Core 1 said in that [Father] should do what he wanted.

—I might not have stood out if I said something like that too?

Rokuko just now realized that.

[Un, how about we stop for this year? I'll think about it again next year.]

Saying that, [Father] clapped his hands.
The tension in the air gently relaxed.

[Alright everyone. If anyone has a question, demand, or opinion, feel free to say it during the feast alright? I can't interfere with you all much if it's not on an

occasion like this after all.]

[Father]’s mouth formed into a smile. Just then, a single dungeon core—one in the form of a man in his prime—raised his voice.

“Ooh, our god! May I ask for this one’s wish to be heard?”

[That was quick. What’s up, 380? But first, I’d be happy if you called me dad.]

“That’s impossible, for a diminutive child like me to.... I shall be god’s servant till my last!”

[Aaah, un, so what did you want to ask?]

Core 380 knelt, speaking his wish.

“—! A miracle that displays god’s power! I wish for the resurrection of the dead!”

[Oh? You can’t? The revival of your favorite child, that is.] [1]

“The one this one wishes to be resurrected is his brother, Core 379! During the winter season, he fell into the wicked 89’s machinations and was cast down by the evil god’s vanguard...”

[Ah... 379 huh. You were the twin cores, huh. Yep, sorry, but that’s no good.]

“Why!? Surely, with god’s strength...!!”

[No good] was not [Can’t]. There was a large difference between the two... With [Father]’s power, even if a core was destroyed, he could bring it back to life.

However, [Father] spoke heartlessly as though to warn Core 380.

[Because it is against the rules.]

Even [Father] appeared to be bound by some sort of rules.

[Aah, right! I’ll make a monster that looks the same as 379. The child would be able to take human form the same as you. It’d use just a bit of DP, but it’d be a monster that you couldn’t distinguish from you. 380 won’t be lonely anymore with that right? You could produce as many as you want.]

Core 380 looked astonished for an instant before bowing in worship.

“That’s... oh, god. This one wishes to express his gratitude.”

[Yep, glad I could help!]

Core 380 touched his head to the ground, trembling.
Was he really happy?
Did he truly want to express his gratitude?
Rokuko didn't get it.

Chapter 154 - Rankings

[Now then, it's probably on everyone's mind, so let's announce the DP Rankings.]

With [Father]'s words, the atmosphere felt strained once again.

[Alright, attention everyone! I'll announce the top ten first! Well, the order hasn't changed the past few years so let's blaze through it!]

The first to tenth places were announce in one go.

There wasn't a change even when comparing it to the time Rokuko last attended.

From 1st to 3rd place was respectively Core 1, Core 2, Core 3. 4th was Core 7. 5th was Core 9 and 6th was Core 6. After that was Haku, Core 89, in 7th place, with Core 5 in 8th, Core 10 in 9th, and Core 8 in 10th.

Roar!

Letting out a roar in vexation, Core 5 breathed his black flames towards the skies.

Most of the top ten was held by cores with single digits. Rokuko felt that Haku, who'd made her way into that, was amazing.

Moreover, although the amount of DP the person possessed was displayed alongside the ranking—since Rokuko didn't know how to read digits over one trillion, even though she understood that it was awesome and endless, she couldn't read it.

[Hmm, after all, 1, 2, and 3 are excellent. I'm glad. Keep on collecting DP like you've been.]

"I am extremely glad to be honored by your praise, father."

Taking a knee, Core 1 gave thanks like a knight would. Core 2 and Core 3 followed suit as though taking his lead. Core 2 and Core 3 were each respectively silver and copper colored knights. Among the first to ninety-ninth cores that were called the First Series, there was talk that [Father] made these three in particular deliberately courteous, so it was taken as natural.

Even so, after accumulating so much DP to the point that it was unreadable and still being told to collect more, Rokuko felt that they were truly in a different realm from her.

[7 and 9, do your best as well. Try to pass Core 3 if you're able alright?]

"Yes, Tou-sama."

"I will do my utmost."

Core 7 and Core 9 both held female forms and had green and blue hair respectively. They were called [Mountain God] and [Sea God]. Well, Haku was also called [White Goddess], so Rokuko felt they were like her.

[6, 89, 5, your positions allow you to take watch of those who rank lower. Raising them is important as well, thank you.]

"Your words are too kind."

"Above all, I am happy to please Otou-sama."

"Oh father, this immature Core 5 is glad to be of use."

Core 6. A grim-faced man wearing an ominous black armor. Generally referred to as the [Great Demon King], he is the lead of the Demon King Faction. Core 89. Needless to say, she was Haku. Founder of the Raverio Empire, she was Rokuko's elder sister. She was called [Betrayal].

Core 5. As the only one in the top ten to not take the form of a human, he was a black dragon. He did not wish to conceal the appearance he received from [Father] and did not wish to change his form. Many reptile-type cores, Ontentoo included, chose the same. They were known as the Dragon King Faction.

[10, 8. You two have been giving it your best. You have my regards forever, keep on living alright?]

"My king, I appreciate for your happiness."

"I will answer your expectations with my all, master!"

Core 10. He imitated [Father]'s outfit, but the vestment that wrapped the old man's body was ornamented resplendently.

Core 8. Contrasting Core 10, the elder merely wore simple clothing and leaned on a cane.

[Well then, next I'll announce everything up to 699th place. Man, there's a

lot of swapping around in the lower positions so it's pretty fun to watch right?]

A huge landscape-oriented table appeared with much smaller writing on it than the placements for the top ten. If Kehma were here, he probably would've said that they were similar to test announcement tables.

It showed all dungeon cores ranking between eleventh and six hundred ninety-nine place.

It also showed what dungeons had died like Core 379. It recorded how much DP they had at that time, but no further changes.

And so Rokuko started looking around the low rankings, looking for her name. That said, since her earnings increased drastically after Kehma arrived, she was hoping that she might be able to have escaped from the low rankings.

Then, looking from last place up... she saw cores that died immediately after being produced and cores that had used all of their DP in their final struggles, going all the way to 0 DP... she'd looked all the way through to the four hundreds but still didn't see [695]. This continued all the way through to the three hundreds.

There were many 600 Series inside of the three hundreds, practically all of them looked different as they couldn't take human form yet.

Seeing Rokuko browsing, Core 629, an orange rabbit, piped up to Rokuko while rubbing its face.

"Nikyu? What'chu doin' there 695? Aren'chu at the bottom~?"

"Eh, ah, no, um... My number, it's not there. It's strange."

"... You're finally forgot by papa?"

"I-I don't think so."

"Then can'chu look with the DP column? Won't miss it that way!"

"Oh, right."

Recalling how much DP she had, Rokuko looked through the DP rankings in front of her.

... Three hundredth place, 629. 351,200 DP in possession.

Huh? Come to think of it, how much DP did I have right now...? I got a lot of DP as inn fees Haku-anesama, how much was that?

And so, she looked at the DP display on the menu. After she recently put a

limitation on the display for how much she could use, it had only shown around 100000 DP the whole time. It had been a long time since she checked how much total DP she had.

729,359 DP.

“... Un?”

She rubbed her eyes and looked again.
It hadn't changed. 729,359 DP.

.. No, no no. No way. Our property should definitely be in the form of gold coins. Just a little while ago, Kehma said that if he turned all of the gold coins into DP it'd be more than the DP we have now?

Eh, wait a sec. Doesn't that mean we have double this....?

And I'm higher than the 350,000 DP at 300th place?

“What's the matter? Starin' at the DP I saved up. I get it's envious, but it's no good not earnin' it yourself~?”

“Ah, no, it's just... Un.”

And so Rokuko made her way up through the rankings... 250th place, roughly 500,000 DP.

—Eh. Eh, how far up is it?

Rokuko finally found her number.

“... 210th... 695...?”

She looked again to make sure, but it definitely said 695. Turning around for a moment before looking back, it still said 695.

By the way, two hundredth place had 1,000,000 DP, quickly increasing to 10,000,000 DP at one hundred fiftieth place.

“... Fueh.”

An odd smile made its way onto her face without her realizing it.

Chapter 155 - Core 666

When Rokuko grinned, the deadlock trio turned up.

“What’s this here? What are you bothering with 695?”

“Gue gue, here even though you’re the lowest ehhe?”

“Yeah! Don’t you know what to say to your superiors?”

Rokuko turned towards them, but she was smirking at them.

“Oh my. For what reason are you all here? What rank did you get?”

“Uwaah, what a gross face. Did your core melt from being talked to by Tou-sama? I went out of my way to let you know that you don’t belong here. Me? 321st, fufufu, I went up three places ye know?”

“322nd, gekokoko. I passed 650.”

“310th! I’m the best of us three!”

“Oi, 653 getting all cheeky? So, 695. You?”

... Fu. Rokuko laughed haughtily. Then, she spoke with a triumphant look.

“210th.”

“... Nn? Soorry, what was that?”

“210th! Fufufu, I passed you! I passed all of you!”

“Geko? The eternal lowest ranked 695 in 200th, this is an illusion riight?”

“Look right there then! Take a goooood look, it says 210th, 695!”

Rokuko pointed at the table. It really did say 695 in 210th place.

“Whaaa!? S-seriously!?”

“No way!? Hold up, is something wrong with the display!? How could the lowest ranked 695 be that high up!?”

“I’m not at the bottom anymore! I’m 210th. Right, I’m higher ranked! Add [No.] to the 695!”

“I absolutely refuse. I definitely don’t recognize you being 210th. Weren’t you just saying some shit about not using [No.] for us?”

“Ah, that’s right, huh.”

I guess [No.] isn’t important, Rokuko thought, changing gears.

“But what the heck. How’d 695 pass us after so many years of us saving up DP? Father’s mistake?”

“Father’s mistake... no waaaay. Maybe she cheated?”

“Geko geko, yeah, cheated! She’s a cheater!”

Core 651 shouted out [Cheater! Cheater!] with its loud voice.

Rokuko, who had been the lowest rank until now, suddenly rose to 210th place. Moreover, the rankings weren’t based on the amount they earned in a given year. It was based on the amount of DP they’d saved since their birth... it was natural for cheating to be suspected.

Because of that, the cores who were surpassed by that low ranked Rokuko got hooked on by his voice and started paying attention.

“But what kind of cheating could she have done?”

“Didn’t she get some DP from the [Betrayed]? A fixed dungeon battle or something...”

“Come to think of it, there was something said about her winning against No. 112 a bit ago... how did the lowest ranked core win? Does that mean that No. 112 is a co-conspirator...?”

Ah, what they’re talking about is actually close to the truth.

Rokuko thought.

Huh? Does that mean I cheated? Did I cheat? It was illegal?

“Confess! Now, how did you cheat, 695!?”

“I-I didn’t, c-cheat though!?”

“Uwaah, you’re obviously trembling. How suspicious... nyujururu.”

Not knowing how it turned into her doing something wrong, Rokuko’s eyes started to spin, growing hot. She looked like she was about to cry.

“Stop talking, you unsightly worm.”

A cold voice projected out from somewhere. With those words, the area grew silent.

A fiery red-haired girl appeared.

“666...”

“Use [No.], 650. Is that not common courtesy? I am a higher rank than you, and you and I are not close with each other.”

Core 666. The first in the 600 Series to take on human form, she was an excellent core.

She was also the youngest in Core No. 6's Demon King Faction.

"Guh—No. 666! Say something to 695 too!"

"Why should I?"

"Why!? This cheater passed you!"

"She did not pass me."

When looking towards the spot Core 666 pointed towards, it said [180th, 666].

She pushed aside many people, making her way past the 200s.

"B-but! She cheated to raise her rank! Yeah, she definitely got some from 89!"

With the funds for the dungeon battle and the inn fees Rokuko received from Haku, as well as the DP she got as tips, he wasn't necessarily wrong.

—Crap, was that illegal?

Rokuko was even more flustered now.

"Foolish... then shouldn't you just raise your rank the same, through [Cheating]?"

"Haah!? W-what're you saying!? Are you stupid!?"

Core 650 shouted, saying it was out of the question.

Meanwhile, Core 666 simply sighed.

"Not at all. If the placement was recognized by father, it isn't cheating, right? Is it cheating to earn DP through means you can't do yourself? Even if the pretext is extreme."

"Guh... r-right, 666 gets No. 6-sama's leftovers like how Rokuko does, so it's not like she would speak again here huh, soooorry, hohoho."

"..."

With a flash, Core 666 pointed a magic sword clad in flames towards the middle of Core 650's eyes. It happened in an instant, so Core 650 wasn't able to react in the slightest.

"If you insult Jiji-sama... I will slaughter you like a pig!"

"Hiii!? W-what!? Kill!? Y-y-you wouldn't actually—!"

Even while saying that, Core 650 (the snake) quickly retreated to Core 651 (the frog) and hid behind him. Core 666's sword suddenly vanished and she spoke with a nonchalant look on her face.

"So the snake is a wimp? What do you think, 695?"

"Eh? Ah, un, you could... say that?"

"Yeah.... So, wimp?"

"Shaaa!! So cheeky, even though you're just 695!"

"Eh, wait!? Why did it turn into me saying that!?"

Hmph. Core 666 snorted.

Core 666 somehow laid the blame on her, but for some reason she felt less nervous.

—By some chance, did she just help me?

"... Oh?"

Core 666 just noticed something after looking at Rokuko. As for what she was looking at, it was the red ruby and orichalcum ring on her left hand.

"... 695. That's a beautiful ring."

"Eh? Ah, this? Ehehe, in truth, I got a master you know? Then, I got this ring as a present from him!"

"Heeh, from your master huh... seems expensive. If I'm not wrong... that's orichalcum, right?"

"Eh, ah, un. Yeah."

"Could I take a closer look?"

"Eh? Nnn, c-can you see it like this?"

Rokuko completely ignored the roars coming from Core 650, who was still hiding behind Core 651, and held her hand out to Core 666.

She took her hand and looked at the ring... it was a ring that encased an orichalcum band with pure ruby, one without any mars. Core 666 observed it carefully. 50,000,000 DP wouldn't be enough, it was a treasure worth at least 100,000,000 DP.

"Why didn't you turn that ring into DP?"

"Eeh!? No way, t-this ring is important, I got it from my master. There's no way I could!"

“But if you did, wouldn’t your ranking go up quite a lot?”

—Even more than mine.

Core 666 stared at Rokuko intensely.

As for Rokuko, she knew that Kehma had made it with a small amount of DP, so she didn’t think that it would turn into much DP. Well, she didn’t intend to do that since it was her important ring (present), though.

“No, don’t wanna.”

Hearing Rokuko’s answer, Core 666 let go of her hands.

“So wasteful, 695. Really, just a bit... just a tiny bit, I want to break you.”

“Please don’t!?! It doesn’t sound like a joke coming from 666!?”

When Rokuko said [666]... even though it was like how humans would refer to someone by their first name, Core 666 didn’t particularly take it as anything bad. [1]

Instead, she laughed with a smile on her face.

Then, she spoke.

“Therefore, 695. I request to have a duel with you.”

Chapter 156 - Seniors to the Rescue

Wondering if she heard wrong, Rokuko looked at Core 666. It felt like she just said for them to duel.

“E-excuse me, sorry. What was that?”

“695. I request to have a duel with you.”

It looked as though she really didn't mishear her.

“A duel...? Umm, is that different from a Dungeon Battle?”

“Right now, right here, we cross blades. That's all.”

“That's all, you say...”

“My, is that sword at your waist simply for decoration?”

Rokuko was pressured by the girl who looked fired up, as though she wouldn't be made light of.

She pointed to the sword visible at Rokuko's waist. It really was a decoration. She'd forgotten about it up till now, only remembering now that she was reminded it was there.

“... Now, will you draw your sword?”

“No, it really is a decoration though.”

“You wish to go against me bare handed? Right... you really are looking down on me. Shall we move somewhere else?”

Core 666's magic sword appeared again and she ignited it in flames as she took her stance. Meanwhile, Rokuko just wanted to know what was going on. She looked around her for help. Her eyes met with Core 629's. He looked away. Worthless orange rabbit... well, it was doubtful whether he could have even helped.

“Kukuku, serves you right 695. Now hurry up and kill her!”

“Oh, 650. Would you like to join as well?”

“I-I'll pass! I wouldn't do something so savage.”

“... Huh? Dueling is savage?”

In the next moment, Core 666, who was definitely right in front of Rokuko,

was suddenly thrusting her sword at Core 650 again.

“Hii!? I said stop it!”

This time, Core 650 (the snake) retreated to Core 652 (the slug).

“Hmph. Well, my sword is too good to be used on the likes of you... Now then, 695, shall we start?”

Seeing Core 666’s smile, Rokuko thought about what she could do. Her choices were:

1. Accept the duel.
2. Run.
3. More importantly I want to eat Melon Bread.

... She wanted to choose number 3 and escape from reality, but that probably would’ve only served as provocation. On the other hand, if she chose number 2 her back would be cut through and number 1 was absolutely impossible.

—Dangit, I should have at least had Kehma make this sword and these clothes into a golem!

It was a bit too late for her to think about that, though.

“Oh my, it looks like you’re doing something interesting, 666?”

Just then, her savior appeared.

It was Haku, wearing a white dress and smiling.

“... No. 89-sama. Yes, I was thinking about deepening my friendship with 695.”

“Mmm... however, isn’t dueling somewhat dangerous for that?”

“Did No. 89-sama not also deepen her friendship by doing something similar with No. 8 Jiji-sama? Going with that, could 695 and I not imitate that?”

“Fufufu, impudent. Are you not going to discipline her? 6.”

“Kukuku, what, 89? Isn’t it 695 that should be disciplined?”

Someone else joined in. The [Great Demon King] that wore black armor, Core 6.

Sparks flew in the air between Haku and Core 6.

“Is that so? Recently, your child has been buzzing around my things. I wonder if it’s too difficult for you to hold the reins on them more securely.”

“Hoh, I don’t know what you’re talking about. If I ever find out, I’ll be sure to

say something.”

“Fufufu...”

“Kukuku...”

Core 6 drew his black blade.

Haku brandished her white spear in response.

It should've been a duel between Rokuko and Core 666, but it somehow turned into a duel between Haku and Core 6 by the time anyone realized what was going on. The mood in the air felt stifling.

“Heeeeeey! You guys! Let me join in toooo!”

Core 5, the [Dragon King], flew through the air towards them with his huge black dragon body.

Kabang! The air shook when he landed, roaring on impact.

Rokuko, who received the roar from up close, felt her legs give out from under her and she fell to the ground. She wasn't confident in herself, but she managed to not let any out.

... Meanwhile, Core 666 was standing calmly, while the trivial trio fainted.

“I'll crush 89! 6, let's do it!”

“Do you intend to order me? I would kill you first.”

“Haaah!? You want to settle it before the [Betrayor]!?”

“I am fine taking you both on if you wish.”

“Leave me out of it.”

Waving her spear, Haku provoked the two while warming up.

... The surrounding cores all began running away so that they wouldn't get rolled up in the chaos. Rokuko wanted to run, too. However, she was part of the reason this was happening. It was already doubtful whether or not she was related to it though. Rather, she couldn't run away either way; her legs wouldn't move.

[Okay~, you three, stop it there.]

Suddenly, [Father]'s words stopped the three.

[Getting a bit rowdy isn't bad, but going this far's no good, alright?]

“Oh my, my apologies, Otou-sama. I might have gotten a little excited there.”

“Gununu... but I finally had a chance to...”

“It was my error, father.”

Core 6 said a bit much as the other two put away their weapons. The area calmed down quickly. That was only on the surface though, of course.

[However, 6, 89, 5. I would like it if you three could deepen your friendship peacefully. All three of you are taking care of young ones, so your juniors are looking towards you, who are their seniors, for guidance... So, shake hands.]

Urged on by [Father], Haku and the Great Demon King shook hands while forcing themselves to smile. The Dragon King also put one of his claws out. It really was a scene that would cause one’s back to freeze up. However, looking through the monitor, [Father] found it satisfactory.

[But well, it might be a good thing to decide victory and defeat once and for all. With something other than DP Rankings, that is.]

“... Saying that, do you have an idea, Otou-sama?”

[That’s a good guess, 89. You’re correct!]

[Father] spoke with a smile.

[Let’s have a Dungeon Battle between your juniors. To be exact, between the 600 Series juniors... Aah, since only 650 doesn’t have a master, he’ll be together with 651 and 652 as a handicap.]

“... Eh?”

“Hmph, there won’t be a duel, but this might be good.”

“... Huh?” “Mu—?” “Hoeh~”

The trivial trio appeared to have woken up.

... I don’t know how, but it somehow got decided that I’d be in a Dungeon Battle... I want to talk to Kehma.

Rokuko pressed against her temples.

Chapter 157 - Team Match

“—And well, that’s how it happened. We’ll be doing a Dungeon Battle.

Just when I started to think it’d been three days after Rokuko left, she came back and suddenly started talking about a Dungeon Battle.

Rather, who’s this [Father] person? God? It’s definitely god.

“... By the way, that was the first day right? What about the other two?”

“Eh? The other two were for eating, drinking, merrymaking, having tea... I got 210th place you know? And Core 112, Ontentoo, got 63rd. Ufufufufu.”

This girl, she’s happy. Is 210th place something good?

The big thing I want to talk about right now is the Dungeon Battle.

“So, why are we doing the Dungeon Battle instead of Haku-san?”

“Because that’s Tou-sama’s intention. There’s no choice but to follow it you know?”

“... What would happen if we refused?”

“In that case, it would make Haku Anesama into an enemy. Absolutely no way.”

Ah, yep. I also don’t want to do that. I don’t want to die.

“... So, the rules... a three team battle, was it?”

“Yeah.”

According to Rokuko, Core 6 and Core 666 are [Team Demon King], Core 5 and Cores 650-652 are [Team Dragon King], and Haku-san and us are [Team Sovereign].

We need to prepare a new dungeon and only a single dummy core.

If the dummy core is destroyed, it’s a loss. It needs to be destroyed this time, not just touched.

The available DP for us to use comes out to 500,000 DP, dummy core included.

The battle will start in one month and we should prepare the dungeon until then.

... And then there’s a troublesome rule for me.

To cooperate with the superior core (senpai), make the dungeon in

cooperation with the superior core (senpai) using the superior core's (senpai's) DP.

If I took this seriously, I'd expose my hand to Haku-san. I'd have to make a dungeon without using [Create Golem] to not expose it.

... I want to hide [Create Golem] so that I can use it as a last resort, but then the way we've been making our dungeon so far wouldn't work.

I think it'd be enough since there's 500,000 DP, but our opponents have the same condition. How can I be stingy and have more stuff...

Incidentally, the superior core (senpai) group is banned from bringing their own things, but it's OK for the subordinate core (kouhai) group to... So getting Haku-san's helpers is no good.

I guess just happening to pick up some magic swords and other various things that Haku-san has thrown away is no good huh? It's probably no good.

... Maybe I should have Rokuko spin the 1,000 DP gacha two hundred or so times? With her luck, it'd probably be worth it.

"Nn? But what should we do about our dungeon during the Dungeon Battle? Leaving it alone would be dangerous right?"

"Yeah. According to Tou-sama, the spaces will be connected during it. So we can come back to it every day."

"Connect space... like a Dungeon Battle huh."

For him to be able to easily do something like that, this [Father] guy really is suspicious.

"Your Tou-chan's pretty amazing huh. I'd like to meet him."

"You might be able to see him at the start of the Dungeon Battle?"

By the way, a display for the limit to the DP we can use in this dungeon battle and the amount we've used so far was added to the menu. Talk about quick support.

"So, where will it be connected? As expected, it'd be a big deal if something like a huge gate linking to the imperial capital just showed up in the middle of the village."

"It looks like it'll be connected between the inside of our dungeon—at the arena—and Haku Anesama's imperial villa in the capital. It'll change to where

Kehma decides to make the dungeon.”

How thorough.

I sighed. If I make it, there’ll be no escaping. I don’t intend to run away, but I really want to.

“So, what should I do?”

“Haku Anesama is going to come pick us up and bring us to the imperial capital!”

“... Won’t we have a shortage of staff here then?”

“If you’re worried about it, why not summon more?”

Right. I can do that, can’t I?

I even summoned those three girls to be the first ones... we’ve even collected a considerable amount of DP, so maybe it’s about time to summon some personnel to manage the dungeon?

“Fufufu, I am 210th after all! If it’s DP, I have it!”

“Yeah~. Alright, I’ll give Rei 50,000 DP to use to summon whatever subordinate she wants...”

“... Why Rei?”

“Because she knows the details about the dungeon. Meat and Ichika can’t use DP, Kinue-san is engrossed with the inn’s domestic chores, and Nerune’s immersed herself in studying... You could call it the result of the process of elimination. Besides, she’s those three’s leader.”

“I see, she’s the most familiar with the dungeon after me.”

Somehow or another, Rei managed to become the three girls’ facilitator. There were a few things that happened when she was first summoned, but it somehow worked itself out. Kinue-san is the best for practical things though.

“Well, it’s fine. Kehma, when we, umm, go to the capital, I want... I want to go sh-shopping. C-could you come w-with me?”

“... Yep, I’ll lend you Meat to carry luggage.”

Invite me on a date in Haku-san’s area? You know I’d die right?

“... I want to go with Kehma.”

“It’d be a bit difficult under Haku-san’s surveillance...”

“Isn’t Kehma a bit too afraid of Haku Anesama? Haku Anesama is super kind

you know?”

Sure, you’d think that. That’s only towards you...!

Chapter 158 - Welcoming

“... Master, I... will live up to your expectations!”

When I gave Rei the 50,000 DP, she pledged her loyalty again. I cried from her passion.

I planned on something like this, so let's consider it a good thing.

And then came the next day.

The gate opened in the arena and Haku-san arrived.

“Good morning, Kehma-san... fufu, this room is considerably lacking.”

“Welcome, Haku-san. Well, even though I tried building an arena, I haven't finished the monsters yet, so it's a bit embarrassing.”

By the way, this area is about the size of a playing field, but it's as big as it can be without butting into our neighboring [Flame Cavern]'s territory. Ontentoo said we wouldn't clash with their area if we dig further down, so I plan on digging down to expand next time.

“So, it's a team battle this time... do you accept?”

“... Yeah, I accept. Still, I want to confirm a few things that I wasn't able to hear from Rokuko, is that alright?”

“How hasty... is it about the reward?”

Haku-san guessed what I wanted to ask. But that wasn't all.

“Also, please tell me the penalty for defeat.”

“Of course.”

Haku-san smiled, nodding.

It's because Haku-san uses jabs like that that she's so hard to deal with.

“Concerning defeat, right... I believe that it's natural to be concerned about that. It will simply consume the items that were brought and DP. Because this time is something of a proxy battle for us, there are hardly any demerits for you all.”

None? Then in other words it's fine even if we lose?

No. It can't be like that. It's Haku-san.

"I don't particularly mind losing either. Don't pay too much mind to it."
"And so if we don't pay much mind and lose, what will Haku-san do?"
"... We will receive permission to educate our juniors. From Otou-sama."

Ah, I have to win.

In other words, isn't the penalty for losing that Haku-san can do whatever she wants?

"To go with that, the reward for the team that wins is that Otou-sama will give two [Things You Want] to each core."
"... Can it be any two things?"
"No, they will be chosen by Otou-sama you know? It's an honor."

I don't see what makes it such an honor since I don't know this [Father] person, but I feel like I understand it a bit if I change it in my brain to [I'll give you socks taken from your favorite idol]. I'm definitely the only one that gets that.

... It probably won't be [God's Bedding]. I'd love to have it though.

While I thought about stuff like that, Haku-san clapped her hands together.

"Right, we're in a room like this, so how about we have a match? As adventurers."

"I'll decline. I have work to do as dungeon master after this."

"Oh, that's unfortunate. However, let's elevate you."

With a smile, Haku-san took a card out from her cleavage.
When I glanced at the card, it was one of the adventurer guild's IDs, an adventurer card. It had my name on it.

"I had it reissued."
"... Umm, I don't remember losing it though?"
"I am the head of the adventurer guild after all."
"The rank turned into B though?"
"Congratulations, Kehma-san. You have joined the nobility."

Right, I was Rank-B on that card.
And adventurers were treated as nobles started at B-Rank.

However, as a noble rank... although there were ranks such as Duke, Count, and Baron, it was below those. Looks like there's a unique rank called Ventulier for adventurers. It was a noble rank that only lasted for a single generation, but the person was tentatively treated as a noble. It was proof that the person had skill. Additionally, if they continued and accumulated distinguishing services, they could become a proper noble and pass the title down to their children.

Rather, is it alright to skip over the exam? I guess it's fine since the head said it's fine?

Moreover, I'll have the old D-Rank adventurer card left over too... I could use this for something.

"It normally incurs an obligation to pay five gold coins, but I will exempt it as an exception. If it's too hard to accept it for free, how about paying with a cream soda?"

"Haah... I'll treat you later. So, why B-Rank so suddenly?"

"Because I would be troubled if you entered my house as an adventurer. More or less, you need to be a noble."

Aah... it is the empire's ancestor, Haku Raverio's, mansion after all. Even in Japan, there was an elephant given the position of a noble so that it could meet with the emperor a long time ago, so it's probably like that.

While on the subject, isn't B-Rank a huge difference from the D-Rank required to go into Haku-san's dungeon?

"Alright, here's Rokuko-chan's... Ah, there are also some for Kehma-san's party members."

"Ooh, I'm an adventurer...! Thank you, Haku Anesama!"

Haku-san handed Rokuko her card personally, handing me the cards for Meat and Ichika as well to give to them. Rather, isn't it unneeded to make Rokuko into an adventurer since she's Haku-san's sister?

"It would be troublesome for me to give Rokuko-chan a peerage... since she's my sister."

Haku-san spoke, practically reading my mind.

Aah, yep, normally, the empress' blood kin... would be royalty. It would be a high position, but her existence itself would be something troubling. Yep, hard

to understand.

“Now then, now that you’ve become a noble... I invite you to my house, Rokuko-chan.”

“Yes! Hey, stop standing around Kehma, let’s go!”

Saying that, Rokuko-san grabbed Haku’s hands and dove towards the gate.
... Yep, let’s assume I’m supposed to go too.